



**HBIO 300:  
EVOLUTION, ECOLOGY, AND CULTURE**

**4 units**

**Mon., Wed. 2–3:20 PM**

**Room: VKC 106**

**Instructor: Trond Sigurdson, Ph.D.**

**Office: ZHS 256**

**Office Hours: Wed. 11 am - 1 pm**

**Contact Info: sigurdse@usc.edu**

**Required Texts:**

**Hunting Apes** by C. Stanford (253 pp.)

**The Hadza, Hunter Gatherers of Tanzania** by F. Marlowe (325 pp.)

**Fall of the Ancient Maya** by D. Webster (368 pp.)

**Story of the Human Body** by D. Lieberman (480 pp.)

**The Blank Slate** by S. Pinker (509 pp.)

**Guns, Germs and Steel** by J. Diamond (528 pp.)

**Coevolution** by W. Durham (629 pp.)

**Website:** <https://blackboard.usc.edu>  
(site for course materials, lecture notes, quizzes, additional readings, grades, etc.)

**Course Description**

In this course we will study how human biological evolution and cultural development affect the way we interact with the environment and with each other. This course provides a comprehensive overview of how biological and cultural influences interface and make us human. It considers the extent to which we can use Darwinian theory to achieve a better understanding of human behavior and cultural development. We begin with a fundamental premise: that human social behavior is the outcome of a complex interplay between our biology, molded by millennia of natural selection, mediated by the environment to which we were adapted during our evolution, and filtered through a complex web of cultural factors. We cannot truly separate the intricate braid of human biology and human culture. We can, however, ask what the causes and consequences of this interplay may be. This can be done not only for people living in traditional hunter-gatherer societies, but also for ourselves in western culture. We will consider the biological and cultural underpinnings of such topics as the human diet, the human mind, and the development of human civilization.

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Another major goal of the course is to teach students how to create and present professional Powerpoint presentations, as well as academic papers. These are skills that are useful to any career, particularly in academics. The time requirements for this course will be substantial because students will be reading and presenting on the class readings, and also will engage in producing a major research paper and an oral presentation. A heavy emphasis will be placed on daily class attendance, participation in discussions, and the student's efforts to make written and oral works interesting and clear.

Each group will work on a book discussion (preferably with PP slides prepared), AND each individual student should write a term paper based on the same subject, or a related topic subject to approval. The paper should be about 4-6 pages long, and should primarily be based on original research papers on a subject that is related to topics discussed in class. The paper can give reference to the book that was presented, but should also contain references to at least three peer reviewed papers. The term paper does not have to come to the same conclusions as the books used. The paper will be presented by the individual student towards the end of the class.

### **Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the course, students will:

- know key concepts of the interactions of human biology, human mind, social interactions, and environment
- be able to discuss, make presentations, and write papers on the topics above
- know basics of how human societies evolve and diverge, and how a society might collapse
- have basic knowledge on the biological underpinnings of the human mind, including modules such as aggression, sexuality, and cooperation

### **Grading:**

**15% - Class participation/Preparedness**

**20% - Moderation of Book Discussion**

**20% - Quizzes/ Short tests**

**20% - Presentation of paper**

**25% - Paper**

**Schedule of lecture topics** (subject to modification of specific topics and reading assignments\*)

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Readings/Due:</b>
Week 1 (Jan 13-17)	Begin Jan. 13: Introduction of topics and books	
Week 2 (Jan 20-24)	<b>MLK Day Jan 20 (no classes)</b> , summarize human evolution	
Week 3 (Jan 27-31)	Human evolution, cultural evolution	Skim books, pick topics and groups
Week 4 (Feb 3-7)	Early human civilizations, evolutionary mismatch	<b>Quiz</b>
Week 5 (Feb 10-14)	Human diet and hunting. Hunter gatherers	Assigned papers
Week 6 (Feb 17-21)	<b>Pres Day Feb 17 (no classes)</b> . Students present book: The Hunting Ape	<b>Quiz,</b> Stanford
Week 7 (Feb 24-28)	Students present book: The Hadza New topic: Human aggression, cooperation	Marlowe
Week 8 (Mar 2-6)	Students present book: Fall of the Maya New topic: Evolution and cultural evolution	<b>Quiz,</b> Webster
Week 9 (Mar 9-13)	Students present book: Story of the H. Body New topic: The human mind; nature/nurture	Lieberman
Week 10 (Mar 16-20)	<b>Spring recess (no classes).</b>	
Week 11 (Mar 23-27)	Students present book: The Blank Slate New topic: Cultural development, geography	Pinker
Week 12 (M 30- A 3)	Students present book: Guns, Germs & Steel. New topic: Natural vs Cult. evolution	Diamond
Week 13 (Apr 6-10)	Students present book: Coevolution	<b>Quiz,</b> Paper intro due Durham
Week 14 (Apr 13-17)	Additional topics: Religion in Human Culture	
Week 15 (Apr 20-24)	Human sexual preferences, biological sex, gender, and culture	Paper draft
Week 16 (A 27- M 1)	Student Presentations of papers	<b>Quiz,</b> Final paper due on Monday

### Policy on Missed Lecture Quizzes

**No make-up lecture quizzes will be given in this course.** You may be excused from a lecture quiz only in the event of a documented illness.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*  
[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing

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readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.